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replace them by buildings in the style of the day. The coupling of his wife's initial with his own on the saloon overmantel suggests that the last touches had been given some considerable time before 1694, for in that year the lady died, and at some moment before that we learn from a contemporary letter that she was 'the impudentest of women,' and had eloped with 'a Mr. Coningsby.'"

A smaller panel of carving procured from another source than the Holme Lacy set, and typical of the later style of Grinling Gibbons, is also shown in the Accessions Room this month. It is of limewood deeply undercut, unpainted, and shows the royal arms of George the First supported by the lion and the unicorn, and surrounded by a graceful mantling of acanthus leaves. It presumably comes from a church, such heraldic tablets being often placed on the gallery above the west door, balancing the Ten Commandments carved or painted over the altar at the eastern end.

D. F.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE POLE-ARM

AMONG the descriptive labels lately prepared and placed on view in the Riggs gallery is one which shows many forms of European pole-arms and indicates when and in what manner they came into being. The present label gives us an instructive series of these early weapons, which are often of no little artistic merit both in their form and ornament. At first sight they present a confused array, but when they are compared with one another they are found to fall readily into a few lines, which we trace back (about A. D. 1200) not to arms of war but to agricultural implements. Thus, if we except the spear, all the earliest pole-arms were axes, pruning hooks, and scythes, showing clearly that such arms were originally carried by peasants who were drafted into war service, and carried with them whatever hurtful implements they had at hand.

Out of the earlier simple types just noted ("generalized," a zoölogist would call them) arose advancing series, with structures

arising, culminating, and disappearing, just as we see them in the history of shells or beasts. Note, for example, the changes which occur in the beak of a halberd. In the beginning it was not a part of the halberd blade, but a separate hook of metal, like the tongue of a buckle, which encircled the wooden handle of this arm. Then, too, in our series we find decadent lines. Thus, the spontoons which sergeants carried in our War of Independence (and which our state law declares must still be carried!) were nothing but degenerate survivors of ox-tongue partisans; or the tiny guisarmes and dwarfed halberds of the seventeenth century were but the crudely made followers of the magnificent and serviceable arms of the preceding century. In these three arms just mentioned degeneration was accompanied by reduction in size. In another case, however, decadence was expressed in just the opposite way (as sometimes happens in animals), as in the doge's ceremonial fauchard of 1650-1700, a titanic arm, so large that it could hardly be carried comfortably, let alone be used—even when it was formed of a sheet of metal, instead of being a well-modeled and functional blade. These forms were senile, well on the road to extinction, or "gerontic," as a naturalist would say.

It is interesting, too, in such a series of forms to see how a structure changed its function and was thereby "stimulated" to greater evolutionary progress; just as we know that such a condition causes far-reaching effects in animals, as when a protective scale begins to function as a weapon, or a gill-cleft is "pressed" into the service of the ear. An example of this is the ancient spear with lappets at its base, which originally served to keep a wounded animal (or man) at a safe distance, so that it could not "run up" the spear. When these lappets were found of use for inflicting additional wounds, they grew steadily in size (changes succeeding one another for about two hundred years) and developed all manner of unwholesome prongs. In the latest types (feather-staves), in fact, these prongs could be folded together and concealed within the handle. Another

example of change of function appears in the blade of a halberd. This was originally ax-shaped, with cutting margin long, heavy, and convex; this margin thereafter grew smaller in size during a couple of centuries, and after 1500 became uniformly concave and lost its chopping function. It thus acquired the nature of a double beak which was used as a pick, or at need served as a grappling hook when lances were to be pulled down or when a wall was to be clambered up.

Among our pole-arms we find curious forms developed which could have been used only for special purposes ("highly specialized"), like animals whose teeth were suited for a particular kind of food. Such pole-arms we find, too, did not long survive, disappearing just as specialized animals did when their special kind of food gave out. As an instance of this, we may note the billhooks which were common in England in the fifteenth century. In their early form they were pruning hooks with a stout prong at the side. From this form were developed shapes which were very long and very narrow—the cutting blade suggesting a surgical knife and the prong at the side becoming a huge needle twenty inches in length. Now it is remarkable

that this highly specialized type was used only toward the close of the Wars of the Roses when knights were armed "to the proof" with the most efficient armor which the world has seen. Its plates could no longer be crushed, hence the heavy ax-head of our earlier pole-arm gave place to the long-bladed incurved knife which might be slipped neatly between the plates, say of shoulder, knee, or elbow, and inflict a dangerous wound. So, too, this specialized billhook lost its stout beak or pick, for this could no longer be pounded through the plates of Gothic armor, but became long and slender, needle-like in form. By such a point, chain-mail could be pierced, that is to say, because the greatly tapering shape of the point or beak was best designed mechanically to break a single ring in the knight's collar of chain-mail, which otherwise was "proof." The fact that this type of bill did not long survive is accounted for interestingly by the changes which soon took place in knightly armor, for the collar of mail was subordinated to plate, and the huge elbow and knee pieces of Gothic armor, which were easily "caught" by the incurved and inslipping blade of such a pole-arm, appeared in use only for a few years.

B. D.